

Turn them loose

FBI Director William Webster said the other day that "we're about out of the internal security business." A day or so later, former CIA director Richard Helms told a Senate Committee that a proposed new congressional charter for the agency would cripple it.

The FBI is responsible for internal security and the CIA for our security abroad. What's happening? Are things so bad? Well, everybody who hasn't been asleep for the past several years knows that Congress has hauled the FBI and CIA over the coals and rifled, tumbled, tossed and pilloried them to the point that many must wonder whether these agencies are being purified of their (confessed) sins or destroyed.

The FBI, for instance, isn't being hit only by Congress. Its top boss, Atty. Gen. Griffin Bell, has ordered trial of some of its former high administrators and punishment for hundreds of agents. Bell says that the grumbles about his trying to "run" the FBI underline a fact that he wants acknowledged—that he IS the boss. He is—at second hand—which is where most attorney generals prefer to be found.

The CIA has been in an uproar for over two years, beginning with the Senate Church Committee's investigation of its excesses (most of them acknowledged) and ending most recently with the suspended imprisonment and fining of its former chief Richard Helms—who is asking the Senate Intelligence Committee not to use the new charter to drown the CIA in paperwork and leaks.

That shouldn't even need saying. But as Sen. Barry Goldwater remarked in response, a sizable segment of both Congress and the press doesn't want any intelligence at all. It was left, however, to Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan to tell it like it is: "We indict more intelligence officers than Russian spies," Moynihan says. While the Russians spy on us, the government fires away at the FBI and CIA.

That's as good a summary as any of what's been happening for too long.

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